

*Amendments*

*In the Claims:*

Please amend claims 1 and 15 as follows:

1. (Amended) A method of confining a commodity in a composite container having a plurality of constituents, comprising the steps of:  
assembling the constituents into the composite container around the commodity;  
providing at least some of the constituents with characteristic indicia not later than in the course of the assembling step;  
processing the characteristic indicia into information which is characteristic of the assembled container; and  
encoding the information upon at least one constituent of the container.

15. (Amended) Apparatus for confining successive ones of a series of commodities in composite containers each of which has a set of constituents, comprising:  
means for conveying successive commodities of the series along a predetermined path;  
means for assembling the constituents of the sets into the containers, including placing the constituents around successive commodities in a predetermined sequence in successive portions of the path;  
means for providing at least some constituents of each set with characteristic indicia not later than in the respective portions of said path;

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cont'd.*

means for processing the characteristic indicia on said at least some constituents of each set into information which is characteristic of the respective assembled containers; and means for encoding the information upon the respective containers.

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